

# *Issues Scoping Paper*

## NO CLOSED DOORS

Overcoming Barriers to Employment for Newly-arrived Migrants and  
Humanitarian Entrants: Best Practice in Collaboration

Developed by

Metro Migrant Resource Centre Inc.



Supported by



# Acknowledgments

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The working party comprises representatives from:

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- Vateli Mahoni - Employment Service Provider, MTC
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- Barry Higgins - Woodville Neighbourhood Centre
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## Introduction

The No Closed Doors project arose from an identified need for more directed and coordinated support for job-seekers who are newly-arrived migrants (within the first 5 years) and humanitarian entrants. There are numerous reports, anecdotal information and statistical analyses that highlight that this target group is one of the more disadvantaged groups in the labour market within the Canterbury-Bankstown area, and indeed across the South West Sydney Priority Employment Area (PEA).

Recent workshops with participants from employment, training, government, community and settlement services and the Local Employment Coordinator saw a strong desire for services to work together in addressing persistent barriers to employment for this particular target group.

The aim of the project is to develop a collaborative service model which draws in local services to address the social and employment needs of this target group through wrap-around support in order to achieve improved employment outcomes.

This scoping paper seeks to identify ongoing barriers experienced by this particular target group and act as a basis to explore models of collaboration that could be applied in Canterbury-Bankstown.

## The process

A working party was established on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 to guide the project and to explore inter-sectoral relationships and identify the service experience and mechanisms by which collaborations can be fostered and implemented. The aim of the working party is to develop the model which will be presented to a larger forum of services in the region.

A Forum will be held in early June with representation of services within the Canterbury-Bankstown region where a proposed model of collaboration will be presented and some of the practicalities of implementing such a model will be explored. Importantly, it is hoped that the Forum will be the starting point for an ongoing dialogue on employment strategies for the particular target group, and a continuing platform for intelligence sharing, feedback and building working relationships between the respective service sectors.

## Situation analysis

The target group for the No Closed Doors initiative is newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants in the Canterbury-Bankstown area. Despite a number of past initiatives, unemployment rates among newly-arrived migrants and refugees remain high.

Data contained in a recent DEEWR report, *Overview of the Canterbury-Bankstown and South West Sydney Priority Employment Area*, illustrates the disparity in employment participation among people born in OTMESC and MESC populations within the South West Sydney Priority Employment Area (PEA).

### Born in an other than main English speaking country (OTMESC) - Working Age Population

OTMESC Labour Market Outcomes					
Region (LGA)	OTMESC proportion of working age population	Unemployment rate		Participation	
		OTMESC	MESC	OTMESC	MESC
<b>Bankstown</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>61.9%</b>	<b>72.6%</b>
Camden	10%	4.1%	3.9%	75.3%	81.1%
Campbelltown	24%	8.0%	7.3%	70.1%	73.9%
<b>Canterbury</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>63.4%</b>	<b>73.9%</b>
Fairfield	63%	12.3%	8.0%	60.5%	68.7%
Liverpool	46%	8.7%	6.1%	67.1%	74.1%
Wollondilly	6%	4.4%	4.4%	70.4%	78.0%
<b>Canterbury-Bankstown and South West Sydney PEA</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	<b>63.8%</b>	<b>73.9%</b>
New South Wales	22%	7.8%	7.8%	68.0%	75.7%
Australia	17%	7.6%	7.6%	67.2%	76.8%

Source: ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing

The table compares labour market outcomes for those people born in OTMESC with those born in a MESC (Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and the USA).

Points to note are:

- At the 2006 Census, Canterbury-Bankstown and South West Sydney PEA had a larger proportion (43 per cent) of working age persons born in OTMESC countries than both New South Wales (22 per cent) and Australia (17 per cent).
- Persons born in OTMESC countries have a higher unemployment rate and lower participation rate when compared with those born in MESC countries.
- In the Canterbury-Bankstown and South West Sydney PEA, the unemployment rate for the OTMESC working age population was 9.9 per cent, compared with 6.2 per cent for the MESC working age population.
- The participation rate for the OTMESC working age population was 63.8 per cent, compared with 73.9 per cent for MESC.

A significant proportion of job-seekers in the target group tend to fall into Streams 2, 3 and 4 which represent higher levels of disadvantage as determined through employment assessments undertaken by employment services or Centrelink, Stream 4 being the most disadvantaged.

<i>Stream 1</i>	This part of the JSA model includes Intensive Activities, where job seekers participate in activities to develop their skills in resume development, application writing, cold canvassing, goal setting, career planning, interview techniques, job search and work experience.
<i>Streams 2 &amp; 3</i>	These job seekers are experiencing moderate and significant disadvantage (respectively). Job seekers will enter into an Employment Pathway Plan (EPP) which will include activities and assistance aimed at improving the job seekers' employability. The focus will be on addressing the vocational and non-vocational needs of the job seeker.
<i>Stream 4</i>	These job seekers are assessed as having the most severe levels of disadvantage and may be affected by such things as mental health, disability, homelessness, abuse, drug/alcohol etc. JSA providers will work with the job seeker to address their most pressing issues/barriers first. The aim is to achieve employment; however this may take some time.
<i>Work experience</i>	This phase usually begins for a job seeker after 12 months in a particular stream. In the work experience phase, job seekers who are eligible are required to participate in a work experience activity on an annual basis. Work experience activities could include Work for the Dole, Green Corp, Volunteer Work, Part Time Work, Part Time Study, Unpaid Work Experience, Participation in Government Programs or Non-Vocational Activities.

The complexity of needs and barriers experienced by newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants means that a significant proportion of job-seekers find themselves on Streams 2, 3 and 4.

Those barriers are described in a report by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), *'What Works: Employment Strategies for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants'* (2010:3), which include:

- Limited English proficiency
- Lack of Australian work experience
- Limited access to transport and affordable housing close to employment
- Lack of knowledge of Australian workplace culture and systems
- Juggling employment and domestic responsibilities
- Lack of appropriate services to support employment transitions
- The impact on job-seeking caused by the refugee and re-settlement experience
- Insecure employment
- Discrimination in employment
- Non-recognition of skills, qualifications and experience
- Lack of qualifications
- The Australian labour market and disadvantage
- Visa restrictions for asylum seekers

More recently, the Minister for Employment Participation, the Hon Kate Ellis, launched an Issues Paper, *'Employment services: Building on Success'*, (DEEWR 2013: 14), which identified migrants and refugees among the more disadvantaged job-seekers who tend to remain unemployed longer than other job-seekers. The paper highlighted the need to place the job-seeker at the centre of collaborative service arrangements in which employment services form part of a "broader suite of programs that providers can tap into to assist job-seekers". It also identified a disconnect between employment services and other complementary services (2013:17).

## Barriers and issues

Some of the key barriers confronting newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants, identified by the project's Working Party and other sources include:

**Eligibility** - Newly-arrived residents have a waiting period for Centrelink benefits which means they generally do not have immediate access to social-security payments or concession cards from Centrelink within a two year period of arrival. Periods spent in Australia as a resident at any time in your life can be counted towards the waiting period. There may be some exemptions if you are a family member of an Australian citizen, a person who arrived under a refugee or humanitarian program, or the holder of a visa of one of certain visa subclasses. If new-arrivals are in hardship because of substantial changes in circumstances beyond their control, they may be eligible for Special Benefits. Losing or not being able to find a job is generally not considered to be a relevant change of circumstances. Visa status also determines eligibility to access employment services for humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers living in the community.

**Lack of local work experience** - A common reason why employers tend to shy away from employing newly-arrived migrants and refugees is a lack of local experience. There are limited ways in which people can get local experience, and these are largely through work placements in jobs that are under the skill level of the individual, or volunteering in community organisations. However, volunteering opportunities are rare and limited in relevant industry settings beyond community and administrative work. It is unlikely that someone with a trade or engineering qualification will find a volunteering opportunity in their field.

There is also limited capacity among community organisations to host volunteers. Organisations need to have structured volunteer programs in order to deliver a clear understanding of volunteer roles and appropriate supervision. The cost of insurance to cover volunteers is another barrier for organisations to take on volunteers (Settlement Services International [SSI], February 2013) .

**Non-recognition of prior learning, qualifications and experience** - There are many anecdotes of engineers, doctors and other highly skilled migrants driving taxis and doing cleaning jobs; work that is well beneath their skills and capacity because their qualifications are not recognised or their skills used effectively. An indicator of the under-utilisation of highly educated migrants can be found in the Overview of the Canterbury-Bankstown and South West Sydney Priority Employment Area. The report shows that 15 percent of the working age population born in Other Than Main English Speaking Country (OTMESC) had obtained a Bachelor Degree or high qualification compared with 10 percent for the non-OTMESC population. However, the OTMESC group had a lower level of labour market participation for highly qualified OTMESC people.

A common complaint among qualified OTMESC people is that the system to have qualifications recognised or to undertake bridging courses is costly and complicated in navigating requirements and industry accreditation in certain sectors. It is further complicated by different state-federal requirements resulting in a disjointed approach and inefficiencies. Migrants with qualifications would like to see more support and a centralised coordination point (op cit SSI).

**Lack of Language Literacy and Numeracy Skills** - Opportunities for language acquisition through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) for new migrants and humanitarian entrants are often conflicted by the urgency of getting any form of work, finding housing and dealing with the more immediate pressures of settlement. A common outcome is that people in this target group sometimes miss out on the 510 hours of free English tuition available through the AMEP which must

be taken up within the first five years of arrival. Other forms of English tuition, including workplace English, are available through a range of providers including Language Literacy and Numeracy Program providers and TAFE. Again, the challenge to the individual is to identify and understand what is available which depends on their ability to navigate the system.

**People remaining in training system as a safe-haven** - Under current arrangements, individuals in AMEP and other recognised English courses are exempted from looking for work and are able to receive Centrelink benefits, if they satisfy other criteria. LLNP providers observe that this has created 'repeat' learners in order to continue receiving their benefits, rather than actively pursuing work. What is needed is better coordination between language and employment services in order to move people through the system and into employment.

**English and understanding Australian workplace culture** - One of the most daunting aspects for new migrants and humanitarian entrants entering the workforce is the many variations and permutations of workplace culture. Many people suffer culture shock when they enter a job – understanding slang and colloquial terms, rules and regulations, employer and workmate expectations, work practices, roles, and authority and power relationships.

Other than through volunteering and supported work environments such as social enterprises, very few opportunities are available where people can gain practical workplace experience and be 'eased' into job placements.

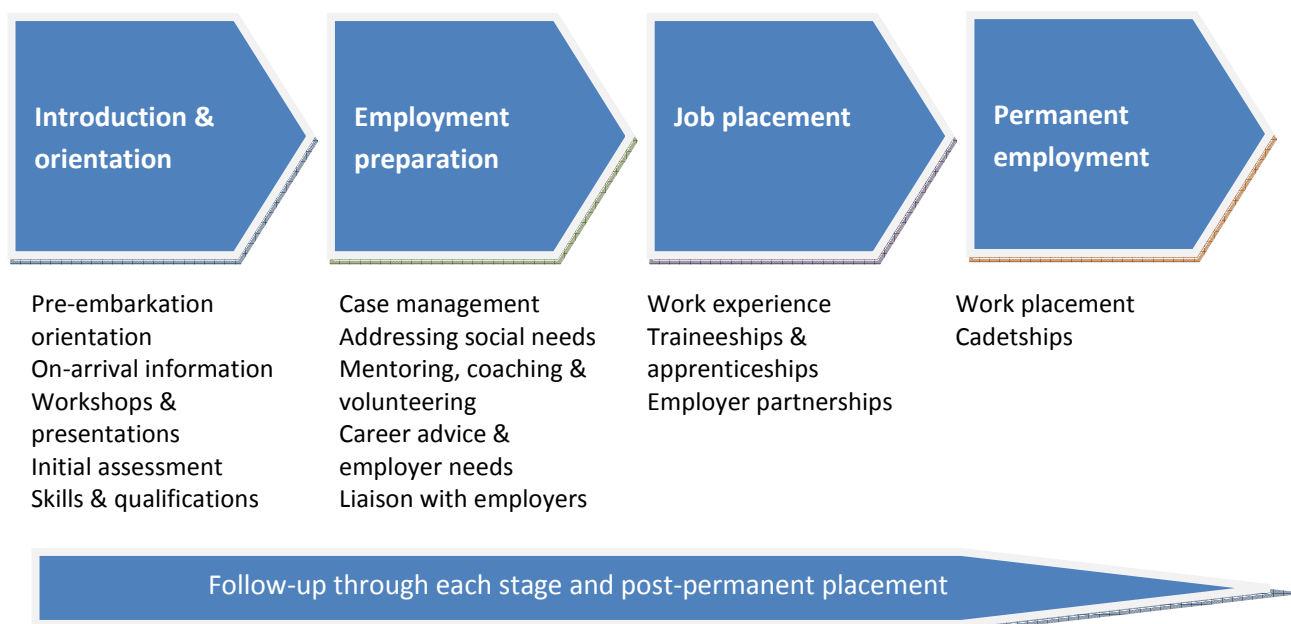
**Discrimination** - One of the more difficult issues to tackle is the oppressive and destructive impact of exclusion from employment due to one's race, religion or gender. Anecdotal information suggests that people of certain backgrounds, or with non-Anglo names, in cultural dress, or with accents tend to encounter closed doors when seeking jobs. In one research paper, people of African background who were conversant in English reported that employers cited their accent for not employing them, whereas, refugees from the former Yugoslavia with poor English had better employment outcomes (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury in RCOA: 2007).

What is needed is greater cultural awareness among employers and employment services to help change people's perceptions and bias in order to provide a more even playing field when it comes to people having access to jobs. A failure in addressing this issue is to condemn people to a life of exclusion and denies them the ability to pursue their aspirations. It also has a more direct impact on their self-esteem and wellbeing which can lead to depression and poor social outcomes.

**Social support needs** - We know from the experience of local community and welfare services that people's ability to engage effectively with employment and training programs can be adversely impacted by other broader issues happening in their lives. People are presenting with more complex and intense vulnerabilities such as being at risk of homelessness or eviction, domestic violence, drug and alcohol problems, mental health issues, family relationship problems, isolation etc. The focus of training and employment services is primarily in helping the client to become job-ready, unaware of the individual's circumstances. Sometimes services are unaware of how, or to where to refer people with social support needs. As a result, clients are sometimes unable to continue in their training or with their job placement because of their immediate support needs.

## Transitional stages

For new migrants, there are typically a number of stages when seeking to enter the jobs market and progress into employment. The chart below illustrates key transitional stages and mechanisms for supporting newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants into permanent employment.



*Developed with the Canterbury Bankstown CALD & Refugee Working Party*

The above diagram illustrates the various stages and roles to transition someone into meaningful employment. As a consequence, there are many players along the way who can contribute to the process. Working in a coordinated and collaborative way can speed up the process and result in better employment outcomes sooner.

## Person centred approach

Experience tells us that different people have different needs and at varying levels of intensity at different times. For services, doing the right thing by clients means adopting a person-centred and holistic view of the individual's needs, including their goals and aspirations. In this way, any barriers that might impede their participation and engagement with training and placements can be appropriately addressed. A person-centred approach informs what actions need to be taken and the development of mutually agreed case plans.

Features of a person-centred approach are:

### Multiple entry points

- Allowing people to engage with the system in spaces that they feel comfortable with. This recognises that some people need support in rebuilding trust of others, or have complex mental health and social problems resulting from their experience.
- Entry points include employment services, Centrelink, migrant resource centre, community and neighbourhood centres, refugee health and other support services.
- Common referral protocols which can be shared by agencies.



- An information portal that can be updated continuously with what's available in the local area in terms of work experience, volunteer positions, traineeships, activities, English conversation clubs etc.

**Assessment** - A stronger and more comprehensive assessment needs to be made when first engaging with the client. There is a need to:

- Identify the client's migration status to determine eligibility to programs and support
- Assess period of residency, local knowledge and English skills – is orientation support is needed?
- Assess strengths including language, literacy and numeracy skills, prior experience, qualifications and work skills
- Identify any social needs or restrictions that would impede the individual's capacity to engage with employment or training
- Identify capacity and preparedness to engage in immediate job placement

### **Aspirations**

- What are the client's ambitions and what do they want to achieve?
- Do their expectations exceed their capacity and skills?

### **Develop a case plan**

- Identify job-readiness needs: preparation courses, presentation skills job placements (where appropriate)
- Identify social support services to refer client
- Seek agreement on the case plan
- Seek consent to pass on client information to other services
- Identify the most appropriate agency to coordinate the case

### **Appropriate placements**

- Follow-up during work or training placement
- Liaise with the employer – are their requirements being met, does the employer need support?

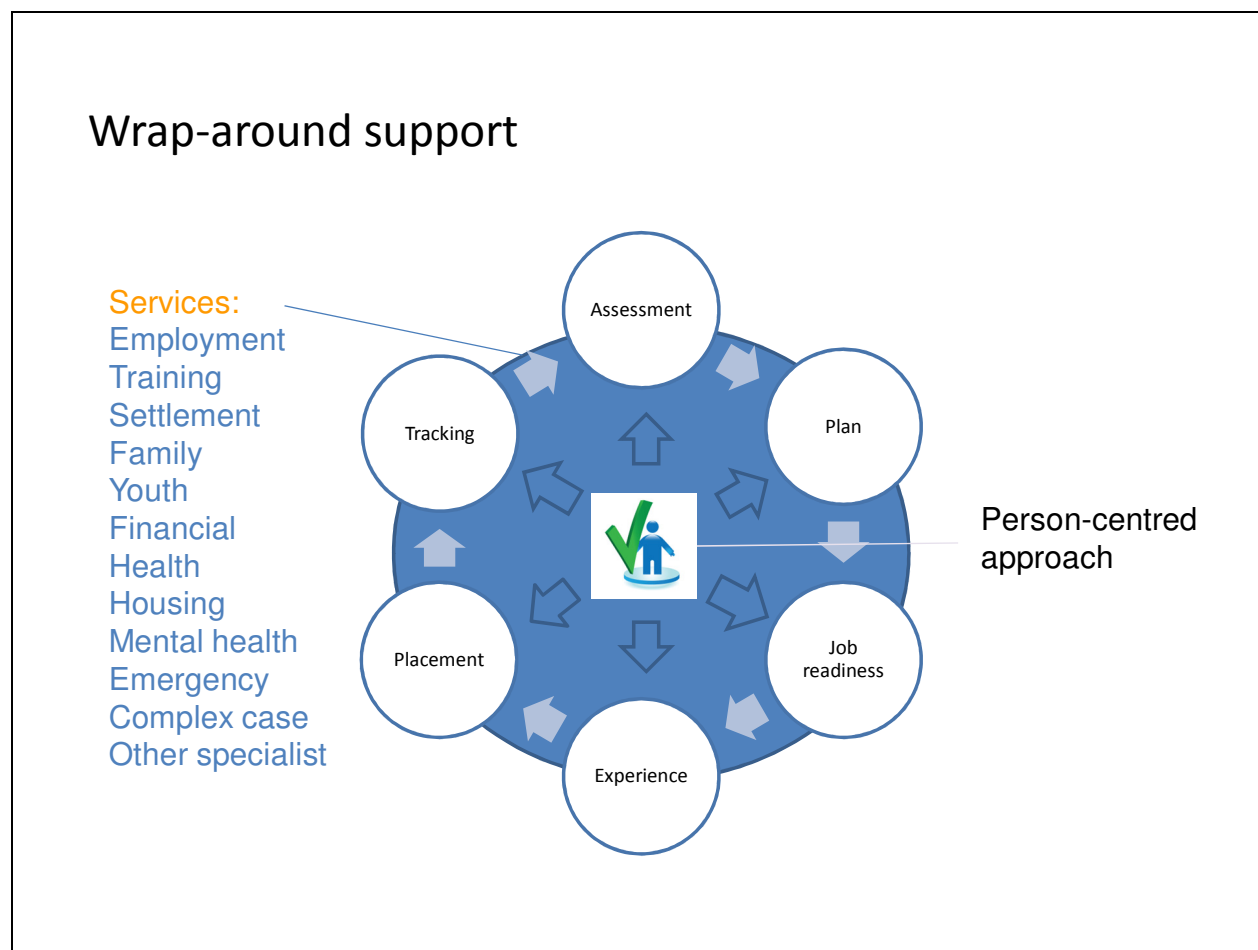
### **Measurable**

- Undertake follow-up with other services, or case meeting on client's progress
- Seek feedback from employer
- Seek feedback from client
- Re-engage client if problems present

### **Aspirational**

- Does the client have medium to longer term aspirations (having skills and qualifications recognised, starting studies to further a career)?
- Re-engage client to progress aspirational pathways so their inherent skills are not wasted and they are able to contribute more fully to society.

The following diagrammatic represents what a collaborative service model might look like.



Clearly, no single agency is able to offer a complete suite of support services that can provide universal to specialist support in order to engage job-seekers with complex needs. This can only be achieved through closer collaborations between services in order to keep the client engaged and to be able to transition them into meaningful employment.

## Characteristics of successful collaboration

Collaboration generally starts with a few committed individuals and goodwill. However, goodwill alone is insufficient to sustain long-term collaboration. There are many variations on the types of collaborations that might arise, and how these are operationalised. As part of a 'place-based' approach and with multiple players potentially involved, 'collective impact' is the term used to describe the coming together to support clients and to appropriately address their needs, and even emerging trends. The guiding conditions on which collective impact can work effectively are described below.

## Collective impact

The five conditions of collective impact	
Common agenda	Participants have a shared vision for change & common understanding of problem & joint approach to solving it through agreed actions.
Shared measurement	Collective data & measuring results consistently across participants to ensure efforts remain aligned & participants hold each other accountable.
Mutually reinforcing activities	Participant activities are differentiated while being coordinated through a mutual plan of action.
Continuous communication	Consistent & open communication across the players to build trust, assured objective & common motivation.
Backbone support	Requires separate organisation with staff & specific skill sets to support the initiative & coordinate.

Source: Hanleybrown, Kania & Kramer, 'Channeling Change: Making Collective Impact Work', Stanford Social Innovation Review, 2012. Leland Stanford Jr. University.

Further points to note are that collaborations work best when each player brings something new to the table, or adds value. A shared vision or common agenda can be formalised through guiding instruments such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to sustain collaborations, outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency, documents the level of commitment and establishes a process to review progress. A key benefit of MOUs is that efforts can continue long after the departure of individuals. The presence of an agreement to work together also promotes collaboration at a policy and planning level.

For a collaboration to be successful there must be open and honest lines of communication, and clearly identified strategies to resolve conflicts. Benefits for all stakeholders must be articulated and transparent to all partners. The role of leaders in the collaboration process must not be overlooked, as 'enablers' who have the skills and are able to develop trust between stakeholders, and maintain the communication of the network once it is developed.

<http://www.adcet.edu.au/StoredFile.aspx?id=1327&fn=Harrison.pdf>

## Where to from here?

No Closed Doors provides a platform where we, the diverse range of services at a local area level, can develop meaningful relationships in order to better respond to the needs of job-seekers, with the aim of getting them into employment.

For newly-arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants, being meaningfully engaged in employment is probably the most important step to achieving settlement in Australia. Engaging them in the early

stages and taking the right steps in assessing their needs and making referrals can avoid long and harmful periods of disillusion and despair, and long-term welfare dependency.

We would hope that services in the Canterbury-Bankstown PEA will join in the No Closed Doors initiative and commit to:

- Sharing a common goal of getting job-seekers into meaningful employment
- Working collaboratively across our different sectors
- Regular engagement to develop our relationships and to monitor developments and trends
- Establish mechanisms which facilitate operational collaboration, and
- Develop our learning and understanding of the 'job-seeker', services and processes across our sectors

Collectively, we can work towards making a difference for newly-arrived migrants and refugee job-seekers.

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